

FOX THEATRE (Music Hall Theatre)  
7th Ave. & Olive Way  
Seattle  
King County  
Washington

HABS No. WA-197

HABS  
WACF  
17-SEPT,  
11-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of Interior  
San Francisco, California 94102

HABS  
WASH  
17-SEAT,  
11-

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### FOX THEATRE (Music Hall Theatre) HABS No. WA-197

**Location:** 702-710 Olive Way (northeast corner of Seventh Avenue and Olive Way)  
Seattle, King County  
Washington  
  
U.S.G.S. Seattle South Quadrangle (7.5)  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:  
10. 550040. 5273380

**Present Owner:** Music Hall Theatre, Inc.  
Securities Building, Suite 200  
1904 Third Avenue  
Seattle, Washington 98101

**Present Use:** Demolished. September, 1991 - February, 1992.

**Last Occupant and Use:** My Emerald, Inc., "Emerald Palace" dinner theatre.

**Significance:** The Music Hall Theatre in Seattle was an outstanding example of the golden age of the American picture palace. Designed in an eclectic Spanish Renaissance idiom, the theatre was considered the finest work of locally prominent architect Sherwood D. Ford. Sculptural cast-stone ornament distinguished the exterior of the building, while illusionary spaces and rich, faux-bois finishes characterized its interior. From its opening in 1929 until its final closure in 1988, the Music Hall served variously as a movie house and a legitimate theatre, retaining all the while a remarkable degree of physical integrity. The Music Hall was one of five surviving theatres of the picture palace era in downtown Seattle at the time of its demolition in the winter of 1991-1992.

**PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

**A. Physical History**

1. **Date of erection:** In 1926, the Real Estate Improvement Company began to assemble parcels of land on the northeast corner of Seventh Avenue and Olive Way in Seattle.<sup>1</sup> The Washington State Architect announced in its December issue that same year that a new million-dollar theatre for moving pictures, to be designed by architect Sherwood D. Ford, would soon be built on the site.<sup>2</sup> The Real Estate Improvement Company submitted a building permit application to the city of Seattle Department of Buildings on July 13, 1927. Accompanying the developer's application were architectural plans from the office of Sherwood Ford, identifying the project as the Mayflower Theatre at 706 Olive Way.

Permit #26905 was issued by the city on August 8, 1927. Inspection records indicate, however, that work had already begun on the first of the foundation footings by July 22.<sup>3</sup> Near the end of construction, the Mayflower was leased for operation to Washington State Theatres, Inc., whose parent company was the Fox Film Corporation of Los Angeles. The name of the theatre was changed to reflect that involvement, and the gala grand opening of the completed Fox Theatre took place on April 19, 1929.<sup>4</sup>

2. **Architect:** Sherwood Demier Ford of Seattle is credited with the design of the Fox Theatre. Ford's name and office address at 630 Lyon Building appear on the original set of design drawings submitted for permit purposes to the Department of Buildings in 1927.<sup>5</sup> Sherwood Ford, along with his associate Don Clippinger, is billed as the project architect in the opening night program for the Fox Theatre.<sup>6</sup> Obituaries appearing in various sources at the time of Sherwood Ford's death in 1948 attribute the design of the building, by then known as the Music Hall Theatre, to Ford.<sup>7</sup>

Born in England in 1872, Sherwood Ford made his way to the United States in the 1890s. He settled permanently in Seattle after twelve years of employment with the Boston architectural firm of Hartwell, Richardson, and Driver. In Seattle he joined the firm of Graham and Myers in 1907, focusing his talents on residential design. When John Graham relocated to Detroit as supervising architect for the Ford Motor Company in 1914, Sherwood Ford, together with James Webster, took over Graham's northwestern business.

Later Ford practiced independently. Among his most notable commissions, besides the Fox Theatre, were the Marcus Whitman Hotel in Walla Walla, Washington (1928), and the Washington Athletic Club in Seattle (1930). In 1929 Ford was elected president of the Washington State Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.<sup>8</sup>

3. **Original and subsequent owners:** The following real estate transactions, on file at the King County Records and elections Division, King County Administration Building, Seattle, Washington, outline the ownership of the property at Lots 1 through 4, Block 5, Bell (Heirs of Sarah A.) Addition to the city of Seattle.

- 1926 Lease, May 1, 1926, recorded in Vol. 51, p. 75, between W. B. Stratton and wife Georgina T. Stratton and James H. Kane and wife Agnes H. Kane, as lessors, and the Real Estate Improvement Company, as lessee.
- 1926 Lease, December 29, 1926, recorded in Vol. 51, p. 401, between Solomon Rogers and wife Eva R. Rogers, as lessors, and the Real Estate Improvement Company, as lessee.
- 1927 Lease, June 7, 1927, recorded in Vol. 52, p. 474, between Hudson Bay Fur Company, as lessor, and the Real Estate Improvement Company, as lessee.
- 1927 Deed of Trust, August 1, 1927, recorded in Vol. 1034 of Mortgages, p. 361, between Real Estate Improvement Company, as grantor, and William D. Comer, as trustee for the bondholders. Leasehold interest in lots 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- 1931 Assignment of Interest, May 25, 1931, recorded in Vol. 1182 of Mortgages, p. 239, by W. D. Cover to Charles F. Clise, as successor trustee.
- 1932 Judgment and Decree of Foreclosure, August 20, 1932, No. 245964. Charles F. Clise, trustee, vrs. Real Estate Improvement Company, Joseph A. Barto, receiver.
- 1932 Certificate of Purchase, October 22, 1932, recorded in Vol. 1554, p. 209. Leasehold estate in Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4. Claude G. Bannick, King County Sheriff, to Charles F. Clise, trustee, for \$594,438 in satisfaction of judgment described above.

- 1939 Warranty Deed, August 2, 1939, recorded in Vol. 1865, p. 259. Olive and Seventh Corporation. Addis Gutman, president, and Irving R. Stratton, secretary, to O. M. Moen, representative of the trustee and bondholders.
- 1939 Quit Claim Deed, October 6, 1939, recorded in Vol. 1865, p. 260. O. M. Moen and Elin J. Moen to the Mayflower Building Company.
- 1950 Quit Claim Deed, May 15, 1950, recorded in Vol. 2964, p. 653. Marcus Whitman Company (merged with the Mayflower Building Co. in 1944) to Music Hall Theatre, Inc.

In the archives of Clise Properties, Inc. are minute books dating back to 1931 of the Mayflower Theatre and Commercial Building Trusteeship, of the Mayflower Building Company, and of Music Hall Theatre, Inc. They contain full details of the ownership, lease arrangements, and financial management of the building. These records, of great potential interest to theatre historians, bring to light the life-long, fiscal instability of the Music Hall, particularly during the decade of the 1930s. It is interesting to note that, for management purposes, the building continued to be referenced as the "Mayflower property," or the Mayflower Theatre and Commercial Building, until the mid-1940s.

From County records and the minute books described above, it is possible to piece together the Music Hall's heretofore tangled ownership history.

Charles F. Clise first became associated with the property in May of 1931, when he was appointed successor trustee of the Mayflower bond issue upon the resignation of W. D. Comer. The insolvency of W. D. Comer, and its impact on the Mayflower Theatre project, is outlined below in Section B.1, Construction History. For the next nine years Charles Clise worked to consolidate ownership of the property.

His first step was to seek a foreclosure on the original deed of trust. The Real Estate Improvement Company, by then in receivership, did not defend the action and the Superior Court of King County issued a judgment against them. The Decree of Foreclosure stated in part that:

...upon assuming the duties of trustee upon May 29, 1931, the plaintiff [Clise] found the security under this deed of trust in very grave peril in that the general taxes upon the premises were in default, the ground rents under the ground leases were unpaid and the principal lessor of the premises, the Washington

State Theatres, Inc., and its guarantor, were claiming that defaults had occurred under their lease and were further claiming a right to direct the employment of their rentals adversely to the interests of the trust deed. The whole financial structure of the theatre building was in a state of collapse and immediate action was required to preserve the security.<sup>9</sup>

The theatre was duly auctioned at a sheriff's sale in the fall of 1932. Clise bid on the property and paid for it by satisfaction of the judgment. He received a quit-claim deed by October of that year. In the meanwhile, he also secured the Real Estate Improvement Company's interest in the lease with Washington State Theatres.

In 1939, Clise moved to purchase the fee title, the ground under the theatre. In a letter to the bondholders from Clise and the bondholders' protective committee, dated June 8, 1939, the situation was laid out as follows:

The Mayflower bonds were secured by a mortgage of a leasehold estate represented by the Mayflower Theatre Building. This means that the only security of the mortgage was the right of lease of this theatre. The bonds were not secured by the fee of the property and as in many cases of leasehold estates during the depression, the lessee was unable to meet the obligations of the original lease. The great bulk of the bonds secured by leasehold estates have been entirely wiped out by the depression but in the case of the Mayflower, your trustee has been able to continue the existence of your lease interest nevertheless only under very difficult circumstances.<sup>10</sup>

A representative of the trustee and the bondholders' committee, O. M. Moen, accordingly purchased the fee for \$90,000. Ownership was then transferred by quit-claim deed to the bondholders, who agreed to reorganize as the Mayflower Building Company. The bondholders became stockholders, and the leasehold estate was eliminated.

In 1944 the Mayflower Building Company lacked sufficient capital to continue operations. Consequently, a merger with another Clise-owned enterprise, the Marcus Whitman Hotel Company, was effected. The new operation was known as the Marcus Whitman Company. By 1950, it had become increasingly difficult to manage the two widely separate properties under one corporation. At that point the company split into Marcus Whitman Hotel, Inc., and Music Hall Theatre, Inc. The latter maintained continuous ownership of the Music Hall until its demolition in 1991-'92.<sup>11</sup>

4. **Builders, contractors, and suppliers:** Congratulatory advertisements, appearing in the local newspapers in mid-April of 1929, list the following firms and individuals as participants in the construction, design, and furnishing of the new Fox Theatre at Seventh and Olive (all firms Seattle-based unless otherwise noted):<sup>12</sup>

Sherwood D. Ford and Don M. Clippinger -- architect and associate architect

Hans Pederson -- general contractor

Hall & Stevenson -- associated structural engineers

Rautman Plumbing and Heating -- plumbing, heating, ventilation, vacuum sweeping system, automatic sprinklers

Ne Page McKenny Co. -- electrical engineers and contractors

Alfred P. Neilson -- painter

Pacific Stone Co. -- "all cast stone used in the Fox Theatre Building"

Western Granite Co.

Northwest Testing Laboratory -- testing and inspecting engineers and chemists

Armstrong Studios, Inc., Los Angeles, California -- complete stage equipment and stage draperies

Isaacson Ironworks

B. F. Shearer Co. -- carpets, chairs, and miscellaneous equipment

Robert Morton Organ Co., Van Nuys, California -- pipe organ installation

Electrical Products Corporation -- illuminated Fox Theatre Sign

Leonid Fink -- official photographer, Fox West Coast Theatres

The theatre's opening night program corroborates the involvement of Ford and Clippinger, Pederson, and others mentioned above. Additionally, it names W. D. Comer as manager of the Real Estate Improvement Company, the project developer.<sup>13</sup>

Original permit drawings submitted to the city include, in addition to design and construction plans stamped with Sherwood Ford and Hall & Stevenson signature blocks, several sketches of auditorium lighting apparatus prepared by the Cascade Fixture Company.<sup>14</sup>

Another key design firm associated with the new theatre was that of John William Elliott, architectural modeler in charge of interior plasterwork. Polk's Seattle City Directory lists Elliott, whose shop was in West Seattle, as a modeler for the Pacific Stone Company in 1928, the year the interior of the Fox Theatre was under construction.<sup>15</sup>

5. **Original plans and construction:** Enthusiastic publicity surrounded the grand opening of the Fox Theatre in April, 1929. In local newspapers, a number of highly descriptive passages appeared, praising the architectural success of the new facility. A full page advertisement in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer on opening day announced:

This noon the new Fox Theatre, the finest and most beautifully appointed playhouse in the Northwest opens with a gala attraction that forecasts the best entertainment that Seattle theatre-goers have ever been offered at popular prices. From the striking exterior in the Spanish Plateresque manner to the charming Baroque of Cartuja interior it is strongly reminiscent of the Moors of Granada in old Spain....

A capacity of 2,600 seats is an item, a crying room where mothers with restless children may view the picture in a glass enclosed room -- where the sound will be relayed by a loudspeaker system -- is another. A similar room is provided for men who desire to smoke during the performance....

The rest rooms and smoking rooms are the finest on the Pacific slope. Rich but subdued color schemes, cunning lighting effects, perfect acoustics -- and many other features too numerous to mention are to be found in the structure.<sup>16</sup>

The Seattle Times entertainment section of the previous Sunday featured a photograph of the new theatre under the caption "Film Fairy Palace" and the accompanying text read:

Original in design and fairy-like in appearance, the new Fox Theatre, at Seventh Avenue and Olive, will be opened to Seattle showgoers for the first time next Friday. The bold and original motif emphasized in the



exterior elevation...has been carried out architecturally in the interior, generating effects which are beautiful and also strikingly effective.<sup>17</sup>

Historic photographs, artists' sketches, and extant architectural drawings together convey a relatively complete picture of the Fox Theatre as it appeared in 1929. In particular, the photographs of local commercial photographer Frank Jacobs documenting opening night provide a comprehensive record.<sup>18</sup> Collectively, these materials indicate that few major changes occurred in the 62 years prior to the theatre's demolition. Descriptions and locations for the various components of the known visual record are presented in Part III, SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

a. Exterior: Photo no. WA-197-46 depicts the exterior of the theatre in 1929. Compare this to Photo nos. 2-13, recording the exterior prior to demolition in 1991-1992. The following original features were to undergo the greatest degree of change in subsequent years:

- Marquee and sign -- The original marquee on Olive Way was encompassed within the broad projecting canopy above the theatre's main entrance. A portion of the canopy returned in a segmental curve to the southwest corner of the building proper, providing better visibility to passersby on Seventh Avenue. The original signage was a vertical, art-deco form appended at the corner of Seventh and Olive and illuminated with neon tubing and incandescent chaser lights.
- Shopfronts -- Ten original shopfronts were clearly defined by rusticated cast stone on concrete piers spaced along the major street facades. Each shop featured a central recessed entry with a marble threshold. Plate glass display and transom windows were set in wooden sash and muntins.
- Vestibule -- The recessed vestibule on Olive Way, where theatre patrons purchased tickets and entered the building, originally featured patterned tile flooring and stucco walls with paired display cases trimmed in cast-stone ornament.

b. Interior: Photo nos. 47-51 partially depict the interior of the theatre in 1929. Compare these to Photo nos. 14-44, documenting the interior prior to

demolition in 1991-1992. The following original features were to undergo the greatest degree of change in subsequent years.

- Foyer -- The two-story foyer, or main lobby, was originally open above to both the mezzanine loge on the north and the mezzanine lounge on the south. Through curtained arcades, patrons in the mezzanine loge could look directly across to the lounge and down to the lobby floor below. No refreshment stand or coat check facilities encroached upon the foyer floor space, as they did in later years. Instead, the latter function was confined to a small room just east of the auditorium entries.
- Shop spaces -- Each of ten individual shop spaces was accessible only from the street and each contained its own lavatory. Walls were plastered and floors of cement.
- Auditorium seating -- According to architect Ford's drawings, the auditorium's original seating capacity was 1,234, with 1,044 additional seats in the balcony and mezzanine. Permit records, however, note a total capacity of 2,282 just prior to opening on April 5, 1929. On the orchestra level, patterned upholstered seats sloped continuously in three sections to the orchestra pit. Some examples of original seats and seating configurations survived in the balcony at the time of demolition in 1991-1992.<sup>19</sup>
- Finishes and furnishings -- Unornamented, textured concrete wall surfaces within the major interior spaces were originally painted in light, reflective hues. In the auditorium, side wall surfaces, scored at the orchestra level to resemble rusticated stone masonry, were topped by smooth plastered bays stencilled in a pattern and colors suggestive of fine wallpaper. In the foyer, or lobby, more heavily textured walls were painted to suggest a rough stucco finish. Set within recessed archways on the main stair landings to the mezzanine, east and west, were matching prints of Spanish galleons in bright orange, red, and black on a paper-backed gold foil<sup>20</sup> (see Photo no. 19).

Throughout the theatre's public spaces, strips of solid colored Ozite carpeting covered the concrete floors. The original suite of ladies' rooms on the mezzanine level consisted of a lounge, a dressing room, and a lavatory. Pictured in Frank Jacobs' photographs are six striking art-deco dressing tables and mirrors, with chairs upholstered in a bold polka-dot fabric. Elsewhere, in the mens' basement lounge and other circulation areas, were more traditional furnishings. Among those visible in Frank Jacobs' photos are: arched and oval-shaped mirrors, high-backed Spanish-styled chairs and divans of heavy wood, upholstered sofas and wing-back chairs, coffee and end tables, ceramic and silver ash tray stands, potted plants in large vases, draperies, leather chairs, and tapestries and wall hangings.

6. **Alterations:** Building permit records, historic photographs, newspaper accounts, and physical evidence within the building all serve to document changes made to the theatre over the years. In general, structural alterations were few. Changes in circulation patterns and modifications in decor reflected a series of shifting uses and tenants, all theatre-related.

- a. **Early marquee and signage changes:** The original Fox Theatre sign remained in place at the corner of Seventh and Olive until 1934. In that year, John Hamrick became the new tenant and renamed the theatre the Music Hall. A much larger neon sign reading "John Hamrick's Music Hall" replaced the original at the same corner location. It appears in a 1936 exterior photograph copyrighted by The Seattle Times, as well as in two undated (c. 1930s) exterior views by local photographers Webster and Stevens, now at Seattle's Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI). A fourth image (also at MOHAI), by photographer Werner Lenggenhager dated 1952, shows the large vertical sign still in place, and a second, rectangular display board positioned above the canopy at the southeast corner of the Olive Way facade.

A series of small-format snapshots in the collection of MOHAI also reveal that, from 1967 until 1977, the theatre's corner signage was again replaced with a large brightly lit vertical sign with revolving parts, advertising the renamed Seventh Avenue Theatre.

From 1977 until the time of demolition in 1991-1992, all large neon and incandescent signage was removed from the theatre's exterior. The original canopy marquee over the Olive Way entrance instead read "Jack McGovern's Music Hall" in stylized letters set against back-lit stained glass. During its final years as a dinner theatre, large back-lit plastic panels reading "Emerald Palace" obscured the entire canopy marquee. Photograph files at The Seattle Times and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer include numerous images of the Music Hall's exterior in those most recent decades.

- b. Office remodel: Building permit records include one drawing for alterations to the main second floor offices of the Music Hall Theatre for the tenant Hameric-Evergreen Theatres. The drawing is dated 1945 and stamped by the office of renowned theatre architect B. Marcus Priteca. No permit was issued for this work, however, and it is not known to what extent the work was executed.
- c. Foyer and vestibule alterations: Building department records list a permit issued in 1950 for alterations to the theatre "lobby." The accompanying drawings, from the office of Carlson-Eley-Grevstad Architects, dated January and March, 1950, show changes to an existing walnut-panelled refreshment counter along the north wall of the foyer, or lobby, the hanging of double doors at entrances leading into the auditorium, and installation of new display panels in the vestibule. The refreshment bar modifications included an apron of asphalt tile flooring at the base of the candy counter, new raised shelving, and construction of an ornamental canopy over the whole.
- d. Miscellaneous changes: Building department records include a permit issued in 1953 to "alter building per plan and change occupancy -- convert restaurant to music store." The extent of change called for in the plan is not known, but may have included the installation of a wide "Vista-Vision" screen announced that year in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer in conjunction with the showing of "White Christmas."<sup>21</sup>
- e. Seventh Avenue Theatre alterations: In the mid 1960s, the theatre was refurbished for live entertainment and, subsequently, for exclusive use as a movie house. The Seattle Times announced on September 16, 1964, that the Music Hall had been equipped with new lines and stage apparatus for touring musicals and plays. Building permit records indicate that the original

pipe organ was removed in 1964, partitions installed in 1966 to eliminate use of the upper balcony, and a single shop remodelled for restaurant use. New exterior signage was erected in 1967 (see above), and on May 21 of that year the newly renovated Music Hall re-opened as the Seventh Avenue Theatre under the management of the Sterling Theatres Company.<sup>22</sup>

- f. McGovern's Music Hall alterations: In 1977, 1.4 million dollars worth of interior modifications converted the aging facility to a dinner theatre operation under local entrepreneur Jack McGovern. These alterations were the most extensive in the theatre's lifespan, and they were well-documented in building permit records and the local press. The architect for this project was presumably Harry Nelson of Mountlake Terrace, Washington, whose name appears on the permit application drawings. Few of the McGovern-era changes were reversed under subsequent management, and are thus reflected in photographs depicting the interior at the time of demolition (see especially Photo nos. 25-29).

Interior modifications included tiering the floor on the orchestra level, replacing all theatre seating on the orchestra and mezzanine levels with banquettes and tables, converting four shop spaces along Seventh Avenue to a full-service restaurant kitchen, and blocking off the open arcade between the mezzanine loge and foyer to install a bar. New sound and lighting systems were installed. In the auditorium, spider lights replaced five of the original ornate lantern fixtures, and still others were exchanged for eight plaster "basket" house lights.

McGovern further redecorated the interior Las Vegas-style with carpets and upholstery of red, gold, and purple. The ladies lounge was particularly flamboyant, with an elaborate centralized dressing table and updated toilet facilities. The auditorium walls, floor to ceiling, were painted a dark brown, and other public spaces a mustard gold. Between the ticket booth in the outer vestibule and the foyer, or lobby, an enclosed coat check room was constructed. In the basement, the men's facilities were updated, and minor circulation improvements made in the rehearsal, laundry, and dressing room areas.<sup>23</sup>

- g. Emerald Palace alterations: In its final years as a dinner theatre under tenant Janie Carr of Bellevue, Washington, (My Emerald, Inc.) some additional

cosmetic modifications were made. The interior was cleaned and some public spaces painted a mint green. Emerald green carpeting was installed in the foyer. Permit records call for lowering a portion of the seating area, altering the bar, and constructing a thrust stage. On the exterior, green and white backlit signage was applied over the original canopy marquee (see above). The work was performed by the architectural firm of Tonkin and Koch in 1987.

## B. Historical Context

1. **Construction history:** Documentation on the construction history of the Music Hall Theatre remains somewhat sketchy. It is clear from recorded transactions, described above, that the Real Estate Improvement Company, headed by W. D. Comer, engaged in assembling property for the future theatre project from as early as May, 1926. By December of that year, when the concept of the Mayflower Theatre was first made public in The Seattle Times and in the Washington State Architect, architect Sherwood Ford's name was already linked to the project.<sup>24</sup> Comer and Ford had collaborated at a slightly earlier date on the development and design of another project, the Marcus Whitman Hotel in Walla Walla, completed in 1928.<sup>25</sup>

Construction on the Mayflower Theatre moved quickly at first. According to reports of the city building inspector, reinforced concrete walls began to rise in July of 1927 and were completed with the pouring of the main roof in January, 1928. By March of that year, construction of the elaborate suspended plaster ceilings had commenced under the direction of William Elliott, architectural modeler. Plaster was applied to metal lath, followed by a sound-proofing layer of celotex, finish plaster, and paint. This work progressed over the course of the summer.<sup>26</sup>

According to building inspector records, the Mayflower project appears to have come to a halt, even as it neared completion. After regular weekly and sometimes daily entries, no inspections were recorded between July 24, 1928, and March 11, 1929. This period of inactivity corresponds to financial difficulties experienced by the Real Estate Improvement Company. Oral tradition among local theatre enthusiasts (set forth in both the Seattle Landmark and National Register nominations forms) suggests that the Music Hall Theatre project itself was the center of a financial scandal, and that architect Ford was implicated and sent to jail. No documentation of those stories has come to light.

Early corporate records of Clise Properties, Inc. instead cite the insolvency of W. D. Comer and Company, and refer to monies owed to bondholders on another project, but never paid.<sup>27</sup> That project was the Marcus Whitman Hotel, and it was apparently Comer himself who served time in the state penitentiary for fraud.<sup>28</sup>

The Real Estate Improvement Company, despite its serious financial problems, remained intact until after completion of the theatre. Successful financial backing of the project was achieved with the signing of a lease between the Real Estate Improvement Company and Washington State Theatres in February of 1929.<sup>29</sup> Construction was underway again by mid-March, and the Mayflower opened instead as the Fox Theatre, just over a month later, on April 19, 1929.

There is debate among local theatre historians over whether an original design based upon English sources -- and reflected in the name "Mayflower" -- was transformed over the course of construction into the predominantly Spanish Renaissance scheme associated with the finished structure. It is unlikely that any such modification occurred, for several reasons. The theatre was largely complete at the time work was halted, including exterior cast-stone detail and interior suspended plasterwork. Inspection reports indicate only that, in the final months before opening, exit lights were installed, seats put in place, a fire curtain hung, and the projection booth expanded and equipped.<sup>30</sup> Further, there is no evidence to date that the name "Mayflower" influenced design decisions in the early phases of the project. Extant drawings from the office of architect Ford, and exterior cast stone drawings from the Pacific Stone Co., dating back to 1927, all depict the theatre substantially as completed in 1929.

In the same vein, there has been further speculation that Ford's associate Don Clippinger may have re-designed the decorative detailing during the project's financial difficulties of 1928. This too is unlikely. No evidence has yet been found to suggest that Clippinger worked in any way other than the usual fashion as a project architect under Ford. While both Ford's and Clippinger's names are listed in the theatre's opening night program, Ford is given full credit in professional literature of the day as the architect of the building. In all probability there was full continuity in the design process, despite the project's financial vulnerability.<sup>31</sup>

2. Subsequent names, tenants, and uses: For 62 years the Music Hall operated variously as a vaudeville house, a movie

palace, and a dinner theatre under changing names and managements. Owing to periods of financial stress, particularly during the Depression, there were months when the theatre remained dark. The following chronology of theatre names, tenants, dates, and uses is compiled from the corporate files of Clise Properties, Inc. and Music Hall Theatre, Inc.

<u>Theatre Name</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Major Tenant</u>
Mayflower Theatre	1926-1928	Washington Theatre Enterprises
Fox Theatre	1929-1932	Washington State Theatres
The Roxy	1933-1934	Jensen and Von Herberg
John Hamrick's Music Hall	1934-1956	Cascade Theatres Corporation/John Hamrick Theatres, Inc.
Music Hall Theatre	1956-1965	The Olympic Incorporated/The Edris Company
Seventh Avenue Theatre	1967-1977	Sterling Theatres Co.
Jack McGovern's Music Hall	1977-1983	N & M Enterprises, Inc.
Music Hall Theatre	1983-1984	Evergreen Entertainment, Inc.
Emerald Palace	1987-1988	My Emerald, Inc.

Officials William Fox and H. B. Franklin of the Fox Film Corporation and Fox West Coast Theatres, the parent company of Washington State Theatres, were prominently featured in the publicity surrounding opening ceremonies at the new Fox Theatre in Seattle.<sup>32</sup> The opening night attraction was the musical comedy "Broadway Melody" starring Bessie Love, Charles King, and Anita Page. Billed as the first "all talking, all singing, all dancing" motion picture of its day, the film drew a crowd of 5000 patrons who formed a line around the block in anticipation of the noontime opening. That evening, Kleig lights flooded the corner as movies were taken of the crowd itself.<sup>33</sup> Over the next few years as the Fox, the theatre hosted a wide variety of live entertainment ranging from the Don Cossack Choir to Yehudi



Menuhin. In March of 1932, Billy Rose presented the musical "Crazy Quilt" starring Fanny Brice.<sup>34</sup>

Renamed the Roxy in 1933, another popular opening night featured the motion picture "Grand Hotel," with George Jessel and Norma Talmadge on stage. But John Von Herberg's lease on the Roxy was short-lived. Minute books for the Mayflower Theatre and Commercial Building that year note the lack of patronage and decided financial losses experienced by the tenant.<sup>35</sup>

In the midst of the Depression in the spring of 1934, local operator John Hamrick (who also managed the Blue Mouse and Music Box Theatres in Seattle) signed a long lease on the theatre and renamed it John Hamrick's Music Hall. When the Seattle Post-Intelligencer announced this encouraging development, it quoted Hamrick as follows:

I have always regarded the theatre at Seventh Avenue and Olive Street as Seattle's most beautiful theatre edifice, both interior and exterior. The playhouse retains with its large seating capacity the intimate atmosphere which characterizes my present holdings and in which I take particular pride.<sup>36</sup>

During the 20-some years that followed, major theatrical events made their debut on the stage of the Music Hall Theatre. In 1935, the Seattle Civic Opera Association produced Verdi's "The Masked Ball" under the direction of Sarah Albert Truax, a successful Seattle actress. The following year, influential Austrian director-producer Max Reinhardt presented his acclaimed production of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The cast included Dick Powell, James Cagney, Joe E. Brown, Olivia de Havilland, Victor Jory, Mickey Rooney, and Billy Barty. The Seattle Symphony held special performances and two full seasons at the Music Hall in the early 1940s. The orchestra performed with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, presenting "The Nutcracker" on stage in 1942. Manager John Hamrick brought a full range of entertainers to the theatre, including such stars as Jeanette MacDonald, Helen Morgan, Jerry Colonna, and Bob Hope.<sup>37</sup>

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, under the Edris Company (assignee of John Hamrick Theatres, Inc.), the Music Hall featured concerts staged by local promoters, touring musicals, and first-run motion pictures. On May 21, 1967, John Danz of Sterling Theatres opened a newly-refurbished Music Hall as the Seventh Avenue Theatre, and operated it as a movies-only facility for the next ten years.

The theatre closed to the public in 1977, only to open again in 1978 under a new lease with local restaurateur and nightclub-owner Jack McGovern and his partners William F. Niemi, Sr. and William Niemi, Jr. Remodelled extensively at that time as a dinner theatre, McGovern's Music Hall offered Las Vegas-style "follies" staged by Greg Thompson and starring Julie Miller. McGovern also brought in headliners Peggy Lee, Diahann Carroll, Johnie Ray, Frankie Avalon, Cyd Charisse, Tony Martin and the Mills Brothers.

In 1983, McGovern's Music Hall closed its doors in the face of escalating financial losses. Two subsequent tenants, Evergreen Entertainment (with Paramount Theatre owners Norm Volotin and Eulysses Lewis) and My Emerald (Janie Carr), sought to revive dinner theatre in 1983-'84 and 1987-'88, respectively. Both ventures failed and, from June of 1988 until its demolition in 1991-'92, the Music Hall Theatre at Seventh and Olive remained dark.

3. **Final years:** In 1988, Music Hall Theatre, Inc., owner of the property, applied to the city of Seattle for a master use permit to demolish the unprofitable building and to establish future use of the site for construction of a hotel. An Environmental Impact Statement was prepared in 1989, assessing the impact of site redevelopment. Because the theatre had been recommended for designation as a Seattle City Landmark in 1974, the Seattle Landmarks Board attempted to forestall its demolition through the Controls and Incentives provisions of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Ordinance No. 106348. Local preservationist groups, such as Allied Arts and Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority, also worked to preserve the building and, in 1990, sponsored its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

In April, 1991, after much public debate, the Seattle Hearing Examiner recommended against imposing controls on the theatre's features and reversed a decision of the Landmarks Board to deny a Certificate of Approval to demolish the structure. Subsequently, the Seattle City Council supported the Hearing Examiner's decision. The owner pledged to document the building in accordance with HABS standards. On September 10, 1991, the owners held a public sale by auction of all fixtures, furnishings, and architectural details. For a listing of the disposition of these items see Part III. F., SOURCES OF INFORMATION, Artifacts. Last minute negotiations between the owners and potential buyers of the theatre continued until September 25, but ultimately proved unsuccessful. Demolition of the Music Hall Theatre proceeded in early October, and continued

through February of 1992. Contractors for the demolition were the McFarland Wrecking Company. John McFarland personally supervised the careful removal of the theatre's exterior cast-stone work, and retained most of it for resale to the architectural/construction community (see Part III. F.).

Full accounts of the lengthy debate over the fate of the Music Hall were documented by the local press between the years 1988 and 1991. Additional documentation is available in the records of the Seattle Landmarks Board and the Seattle City Council, in the publicly-issued Environmental Impact Statements, and in the corporate files of Clise Properties, Inc., as set forth in the bibliography in Part III, SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

4. **Picture Palaces in Seattle:** The construction of grand movie palaces in Seattle was part of a nationwide trend toward exhibiting film entertainment in increasingly luxurious surroundings. The architectural intention of palace design was to rival the fantasy of the motion picture itself. Theatres increased significantly in scale and plan, and seating capacities grew to well over 1000 patrons. As a city with an extraordinarily strong theatre heritage, Seattle boasted the largest and most elaborate such palaces in Washington State. Seattle made an especially early contribution to the palace genre with construction of the Coliseum Theatre (1916), promoted widely as the first in the country designed exclusively for the showing of movies. Nationally, the peak years of picture palace design occurred just prior to the Depression, from 1925 through 1930. The Music Hall Theatre, designed in 1927 and completed in 1929, fits within that brief golden age.<sup>38</sup>

The movie palace era was characterized by the full involvement of major studio chains, nationally-known promoters and entrepreneurs, and significant architects and artists. Highly successful businessmen John Cort, John Considine, and Alexander Pantages all began their nationwide vaudeville and film circuits in Seattle. Architects E. W. Houghton, R. C. Reamer, and B. Marcus Priteca based their practices in Seattle, designing hundreds of major theatres throughout the Northwest, the West and across the U.S. and Canada.<sup>39</sup> Seattle's Music Hall Theatre was boosted into existence by association with William Fox, of the Los Angeles-based studio and theatre chain. For architect Sherwood Ford, not himself a theatre specialist, the Music Hall proved the showpiece of his career.

Typical of picture palaces nationwide was their increased scale in the central business district. Incorporation of the theatre within a larger commercial complex was common. Offices, retail spaces, and apartments often surrounded or encased the theatre itself. In Seattle, this practice was followed in the design and construction of the Moore Theatre (1907), the Pantages (1915), the Fifth Avenue (1926), and the Paramount (1928). The Music Hall was, in contrast, built as a free-standing structure on a corner block, its ornate exterior and prominent fly tower clearly announcing its internal function. Ground-floor retail shops along both Seventh Avenue and Olive Way were the only associated commercial space.

Picture palace interiors of the period were consistently oriented toward the consumer. The circulation of large crowds was a major design consideration. Spacious lobbies with flowing staircases, glamorous lounges, smoking areas, and crying rooms were standard, while house and stage support functions were generally well-hidden from the patron in subterranean or backstage areas. Seattle's Coliseum Theatre featured a Turkish men's smoking room and a Mother Goose nursery, and the Paramount its own "salon de musique."<sup>40</sup> The Music Hall Theatre was notable for its small but elegant mezzanine lounge, and its generous suite of art-deco styled ladies' rooms.

The latest in technology was always employed to heighten the desired fantasy of the movie palace interior. Lighting, organ effects, stage mechanics, and sound systems reached their zenith in the film palaces of the period. The Music Hall was a state-of-the-art house in that regard. Its orchestra pit featured three hydraulic lifts capable of elevating the entire orchestra to stage level in three separate sections. The custom-designed, four manual pipe organ rose from the orchestra pit and revolved at any angle to position the organist before his audience. Through its coffered plaster ceiling, massive chandeliers could be fully raised from sight or lowered to light the proscenium.

The decorative style of the movie palace was always its chief character-defining feature. Often the degree of decorative elaboration progressed from exterior to lobby to inner auditorium, providing gradual immersion into the fantasy world within. Styles varied widely from expressions of traditional classicism to exotic idioms and eclectic mixes. Illusionistic effects created through lighting, color, and decorative finishes were common. Carpeting, furnishings, and artwork were chosen to reflect an atmosphere of opulence. In Seattle, the Chinese-inspired Fifth Avenue Theatre has been called the city's "most

extravagant and unique eclectic fantasy."<sup>41</sup> The Paramount Theatre is noted for its cool French baroque elegance and its golden bas-relief ornament. The Music Hall will be remembered for its Spanish ambience with a distinctly nautical flavor, expressed through the free use of shouldered arch forms, rich faux-bois finishes, and seafaring motifs.

For a more extensive overview of the social, economic, and architectural context of film entertainment in Washington State, refer to the "Movie Theatres in Washington State from 1900 to 1948" Multiple Property Documentation Form, on file with the Department of Community Development, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, in Olympia. The document includes a comprehensive bibliography of sources on movie theatre history in America. See Part III, SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

#### C. Notes

1. Property transaction records, King County Records and Elections Division, Seattle, WA. Various transactions given in text under Part I.A.3, Original and subsequent owners.
2. The Washington State Architect (December 1926) : 1 and 3. See also the architect's sketch of a proposed theatre for Washington Theatre Enterprises, The Seattle Times, 5 December 1926.
3. Building permit records, Microfilm Library, Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use (DCLU), Seattle, WA.
4. "'Broadway Melody' Opens Fox Theatre This Afternoon," Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 19 April 1929, and related articles; Opening night program for the Fox Theatre, B'hend-Kaufmann Archives, Pasadena, CA.
5. Building permit records, DCLU.
6. Opening night program, B'hend-Kaufmann Archives.

7. Obituary, The Seattle Times, 16 September 1948; obituary, Monthly Bulletin, American Institute of Architects (AIA), Washington State Chapter 17 (October 1948) : 4.
8. "Webster and Ford," Pacific Builder and Engineer (28 November 1914): 30; obituary, Monthly Bulletin, AIA 17 (October 1948): 4.
9. Judgment and Decree of Foreclosure, No. 245964, Superior Court of the State of Washington for King County, May 1932 : 23.
10. Charles F. Clise and Bondholders' Protective Committee to Bondholders of the Mayflower Theatre and Commercial Building, 8 June 1939, Minute Book of the Mayflower Theatre and Commercial Building, Clise Properties, Inc., Seattle, WA.
11. Memorandum from Otto Rasmussen to A. H. Clise, 17 September 1965, Minute Book of the Mayflower Theatre and Commercial Building.
12. See especially the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 19 April 1929.
13. Opening night program, B'hend-Kaufmann Archives.
14. Fred Gleason, former officer of the Cascade Fixture Company, confirms his company's involvement as prime contractor for the theatre's lighting apparatus. Telephone interview, 13 February 1992.
15. William Elliott, son of John William Elliott, confirms his father's role as creator of the theatre's suspended plaster interior ornament. He believes the nature of the large-scale project would have required a larger shop space than his father's own studio in West Seattle. Telephone interview, 11 February 1992.
16. "Announcing the Opening of the Fox Theatre," Seattle Post Intelligencer, 19 April 1929.
17. "Film Fairy Palace," Seattle Sunday Times, 14 April 1929.

18. Six Frank Jacobs photographs are included in this package as HABS Photo nos. 46-51. An additional 20 images, originals now in the B'hend-Kaufmann Archives in Pasadena, were examined and used in the preparation of descriptions in this section.
19. Examples of original seating were acquired by the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI), Seattle, Washington, in the fall of 1991, just prior to the theatre's demolition. For a complete listing of MOHAI's acquisitions from the Music Hall, see Part III, SOURCES OF INFORMATION.
20. The Spanish galleon images were uncovered behind upholstered panels in the process of building demolition in 1991. See Photo no. 19.
21. Don Tewkesbury, "The Day the Music Died," Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 3 October 1991.
22. The Seattle Times, 21 May 1967.
23. Some of these modifications were observed on site and confirmed by "Bruce," former technical director for Jack McGovern, 9 September 1991.
24. The Seattle Times, 4 December 1926; Washington State Architect, December 1926: 1 and 3.
25. Washington State Inventory of Historic Places data on the Marcus Whitman Hotel, Walla Walla, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Olympia, WA.
26. Permit records, DCLU.
27. Minutes of 23 January 1932, Minute Book of the Mayflower Theatre and Commercial Building.
28. A. H. Clise, Telephone interview, 13 February, 1992.

29. Legal agreement between Joseph Barto and Charles F. Clise, May 1932, Minute Book of the Mayflower Theatre and Commercial Building.
30. Permit records, DCLU.
31. Karen Kane, Seattle Landmark Nomination Form, June 1990. See also notes #6 and 7, above.
32. Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 19 April 1929.
33. "House Jammed at Broadway Melody Here," Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 20 April 1929.
34. Don Tewkesbury, "The Day the Music Died," Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 20 April 1929.
35. Minutes of 22 November 1933, Minute Book of the Mayflower Theatre and Commercial Building.
36. "Hamrick Takes Long Lease on Roxy Theatre," Seattle Post Intelligencer, 10 April 1934.
37. Karen Kane, Seattle Landmark Nomination Form, based upon newspaper advertisements and playbills in the theatre programs collections at University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Division.
38. Kay Austin, "Movie Theatres in Washington State from 1900 to 1948" Multiple Property Documentation Form, August 1991.
39. Lawrence Kreisman, "Another Opening, Another Show," Madison Park Post, October 1981.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.



**PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

**A. General Statement**

1. **Architectural character:** The Music Hall Theatre exemplified the genre of eclectic 1920s picture palace design derived from old world prototypes. It was the only one of Seattle's major theatres to be conceived in a predominantly Spanish mode. Architect Ford was apparently influenced by the spirit and motifs of the 16th century Spanish Plateresque period, in which a profusion of ornament embellished walls of austere masonry, juxtaposed light and shadow created spatial illusions and heavily carved wooden detailing adorned interiors.

Spanish Revival styles in America had indeed reached a peak of popularity during this era. The idiom was first promoted at the California-Pacific Exposition in San Diego in 1915. The Million Dollar Theatre in Los Angeles, erected in 1917, further showcased the Spanish Churrigueresque and strongly influenced West Coast theatre design. Later, the revival was widely disseminated in source books such as Lawrence Bottomly's Spanish Details (1924) and Richard Requa's Old World Inspiration for American Architecture (1929). The Music Hall Theatre drew freely from such stylistic models, achieving a fantasy environment that evoked the romance and mysticism of Old Spain.

2. **Condition of fabric:** Demolition of the Music Hall Theatre occurred between October, 1991, and February, 1992. Many architectural details, fixtures, and furnishings from the interior and exterior of the building were salvaged during the course of demolition. See Part III-F, for a summary of the disposition of artifacts. As of May, 1992, the site stood vacant, partially filled with rubble. A remnant of the east exterior wall remained in place serving as a barricade along the alley.

**B. Description of Exterior**

1. **Overall dimensions, massing:** The Music Hall was a free-standing theatre, trapezoidal in plan and irregular in massing. The footprint of the building filled approximately 22,464 square feet of its half-block site. Dimensions given in architect Ford's design drawings (and corroborated to the nearest foot by recent measurements) were as follows: Olive Way (south wall), 119 feet 2 inches; Seventh Avenue (west

wall), 172 feet 7 inches; alley (east wall), 204 feet 3 inches; rear (north wall), 118 feet 6 inches. Six structural bays comprised the Olive Way side, and ten bays the Seventh Avenue side of the building (see Photo nos. 52-53).

The main body of the theatre was three stories in height, housing orchestra, mezzanine, and balcony levels. A full below-grade basement occupied the subterranean level. Hidden from street view by an ornate parapet wall, the ridge line of the shallow-pitched roof rose 73 feet above the datum line at the base of the stage. A wing of commercial storefronts and theatre offices, one to one and one-half stories in height, projected from the main section of the theatre, abutting the sidewalk along Seventh Avenue. At the rear, or north, end of the building, a gable-roofed fly tower rose over the stage below, to a height of 97 feet 7 inches above the datum line (see Photo nos. 2-7, 58-62).

2. **Foundations:** The Music Hall rested upon a substructure of 88 reinforced concrete pilings. The footings were poured on solid ground at a depth of 27 feet 6 inches.
3. **Structural systems, framing:** Throughout its entirety, the structural shell of the theatre building was of poured, reinforced concrete, 2000 pounds-per-square-inch in strength. Basement and orchestra level floors were concrete slabs, and the mezzanine and balcony levels were fashioned of structural steel encased in concrete. The Music Hall roof was supported by six steel trusses (from which hung the elaborate suspended plaster ceiling of the auditorium), and steel purlins 6 feet on-center. The roof itself was of poured reinforced concrete, approximately 6 inches in thickness (see Photo nos. 57-59).
4. **Walls:**
  - a. **Olive Way:** The south side of the Music Hall functioned as its formal facade, giving access to the theatre. Faced with smooth grey stucco and exuberant cast-stone ornament, this wall was dominated horizontally by a broad canopy marquee and vertically by four massive, engaged columns of cast stone. At street level, a wide recessed vestibule with an octagonal ticket booth was enframed by a bold band of decorative cast-stone relief combining heraldic shields, urns, floral ornament, and rope moldings. To either side of the vestibule were shopfronts (two to

the west and one to the east) articulated by piers with rusticated cast-stone facing above granite bases (see Photo nos. 2, 3, 60).

Green plastic signage had encased the original canopy marquee since 1987. Directly above it, four colossal, engaged columns with cabled shafts rose from bases sculpted with phoenix and rosette motifs. These columns defined the frontispiece of the Olive Way facade. At their base, the columns were connected by a balustrade of cast stone, and were further united by a prominent belt course that wrapped around to the west, or Seventh Avenue, side of the building along the second story roofline of the retail wing. Between the colossal columns were three large, shouldered-arch windows of stained glass and, above these, cast-stone panels of rich Plateresque relief featuring urns and floral ornament. Flanking the frontispiece, broad expanses of unadorned stucco were punctuated only by single, shouldered-arch windows with elaborate surrounds. At the base of these two windows projected three-sided decorative balconies with portrait medallions of Spanish conquistadors in sharp relief (see Photo nos. 2, 9, 11).

A richly-detailed entablature crowned the Olive Way facade and united it visually with the theatre's secondary facade on Seventh Avenue. The entablature had a wide frieze of cast stone fashioned in a curious checker or diaper pattern. Each column "capital" at the frieze level featured a large foliated cartouche. The frieze was broken at regular intervals by escutcheons, or coats-of-arms, and by candelabra which terminated at the parapet in small pineapple finials. These in turn alternated with shell motifs and larger pawn-shaped finials as cresting all along the parapet wall. Most prominent at the Olive Way roofline, perched atop each engaged column, were four massive fluted urns each weighing over 8000 pounds (see Photo nos. 2, 9, 10).

- b. Seventh Avenue: The west side of the Music Hall provided two exits from the theatre auditorium and street access to seven retail shops. While this wall had a distinctly horizontal emphasis, the overall composition was asymmetrical and the massing irregular. Here, as on the Olive Way facade, smooth stuccoed wall surfaces contrasted with Plateresque cast-stone relief. At street level, piers clad with rusticated cast stone defined (from north to south) a group of three shopfronts in near-original condition,

an exit from the front end of the auditorium, a second cluster of three retail spaces converted to kitchen use in the 1970s, a prominent single storefront, a more formal exit portal from the Seventh Avenue foyer, and a large retail shop at the corner of Seventh and Olive. A partial second story at the south end of this commercial wing housed the theatre's interior suite of ladies' rooms, and was itself accentuated by massive cast-stone urns at the roofline. The urns continued to the north end of the building along the length of this wing, placed at intervals on the parapet above each rusticated pier (see Photo nos. 4-6).

At its mid-level, set back from the lot line and the retail shops below, the Seventh Avenue facade featured both shouldered-arch and paired, round-arch fenestration. Applied cast-stone relief between two sets of engaged, colossal columns at either end of the building defined projecting bays, which in turn marked locations of the stage and the balcony staircase within. Along the Seventh Avenue roofline, the entablature continued the flamboyant frieze and full parapet detail of the Olive Way facade. The fly tower was rather sparingly ornamented with a single octagonal window, curvilinear wave-patterned coping at the parapet, and obelisk-shaped pedestals. In architect Ford's design drawings, these obelisks supported pineapple finials, a detail which opening-day photographs reveal was never actually completed (see Photo nos. 4-6, 46, 61).

- c. Alley: The east side of the Music Hall fronted a mid-block alley connecting Olive Way with Stewart Street to the north. This wall served a strictly utilitarian function, providing fire exits and stage doors. At the far south corner of this wall, finish stucco and cast-stone entablature ornament wrapped around some 24 feet from the front facade, creating visual continuity from Olive Way. But the remainder of the alley wall was a bare concrete surface with its wooden form texture undisguised. Along this elevation the pier and spandrel pattern of the concrete structure was also clearly discernable (see Photo nos. 3, 8, 62).
- d. Rear: The north side of the theatre was an entirely blank wall facing a parking lot and rent-a-car business on Stewart Street. Here also, the texture of wooden forms on the concrete surface was visible. In recent years this wall had been painted a dark grey

and carried commercial signage high on the fly tower (see Photo no. 7).

5. **Vestibule:** Architect Ford's design drawings designate the theatre's recessed formal entryway on Olive Way as the vestibule. It was here that the patron first encountered a taste of the colors and materials that would be experienced on the interior. Polychromed tile flooring had been removed by the time of the building's demolition, but the pattern remained clearly recognizable on the concrete surface. The low ceiling of the vestibule was of rough concrete with decorative rafters left textured by the construction forms in imitation of wood. Their surfaces were stencilled in red, orange, and black with heraldic and armorial motifs. Two ornate wrought-iron lanterns hung from sunburst medallions. Modern fluorescent lighting panels had been installed in recent years between the rafters (see Photo nos. 11, 13, 54).

The back wall of the vestibule retained its rusticated cast-stone facing above a granite base. Over the portals to the theatre, there remained the shadow of wooden ornament, since removed. The side walls of the vestibule, originally of similar finish with decorative frames of cast stone around paired reader boards, had been remodelled in 1950 with a synthetic panelling and large, aluminum-framed display cases (see Photo no. 13).

The original octagonal ticket booth stood largely unaltered at the time of demolition. It had a granite base, above which synthetic panelling to match the vestibule walls had been applied. Above counter height, glazed openings framed by exotic arches were enlivened with plaster relief and finished to resemble burnished wood. Connecting the ticket booth to the interior foyer, or lobby, a low, wood-panelled corridor had been framed in to serve as a cloak room during the Jack McGovern Music Hall era of the late 1970s (see Photo no. 12).

## 6. **Openings:**

- a. **Doors & doorways:** The formal portals to the Music Hall Theatre, through the Olive Way vestibule, consisted of three sets of paired, double-leaf swinging doors of solid wood. The central pair was obscured, both inside and out, by the 1970s cloak room. Each double door had six octagonal, molded panels. The uppermost panels were distinguished by decorative iron grilles of a Spanish character. A

second major opening from the theatre proper was the southwest exit from the foyer onto Seventh Avenue. This was an elaborate portal, accentuated at the roofline by urns and cast-stone detail on the parapet, and by a delicate iron railing at the ladies' lounge window level directly above. The opening itself was flanked by rusticated piers and topped by Plateresque ornament in three panels, bordered by curvilinear wave-patterned molding. Three double-leaf wood doors with octagonal panels were slightly recessed into the wall, and featured unusual architraves of wooden, broken-scroll pediments with pineapple finials. A third major opening was the northwest exit onto Seventh Avenue, leading out through an interior passage from the auditorium. This portal was similar in total configuration to that just described above, but contained only two sets of double doors. Architect Ford's original drawings depict a slightly different door panel design than that which was actually constructed (see Photo nos. 5, 6, 13, 61).

Each retail shop on Seventh Avenue and Olive Way had a recessed entry with a marble threshold. With just one exception, these doors had a single glazed panel and an operable transom above. At the time of demolition, four of these remained in their original configuration on Seventh Avenue, and three remained on Olive Way, one of the latter being a double door. In the process of converting three shop spaces on Seventh Avenue to a kitchen for Jack McGovern's dinner theatre operation, three shop doors and their transoms were brought forward flush with the sidewalk (see Photo nos. 5, 54).

On the east or alley side of the theatre were six fire exits and stage entrances, all simple metal doors. Two of these fire doors provided egress from the upper and lower levels of the balcony. At stage floor level was an entrance for sets and wardrobe, approximately 20 feet in height. This was a double sliding door on tracks and, from it, a track for a crane to move heavy equipment protruded into the alley (see Photo nos. 8, 62).

- b. Windows: The Music Hall had three basic types of fenestration: decorative stained glass, utilitarian steel sash, and plate glass store fronts. Three character-defining stained glass windows headed by shouldered arches (a signature form throughout the building) dominated the frontispiece of the Olive Way facade. These were enframed by cast-stone moldings

and the glazing was set within a grid of steel muntins. A flamelike pattern of gold, orange, violet, and blue provided filtered light to the mezzanine lounge within. The coloration was most intense at the base and lightened in the uppermost reaches of the window. A smaller shouldered-arched window of identically-patterned stained glass was situated within each outer bay of the Olive Way facade. These two windows boasted the most flamboyant surrounding detail, including broken-scroll pediments crowned with shells and pineapple finials on pilaster pedestals. Three small square windows were aligned centrally at the cornice line. Recessed deep within curvilinear surrounds, these openings gave light and ventilation to the projection room (see Photo nos. 2, 9).

The stained glass windows on the Seventh Avenue facade were false. Single large, shouldered-arched windows, similar in scale and articulation to those at the front of the theatre, marked the two projecting bays at the north and south ends of the auditorium. Three pairs of false stained glass windows with round-arched heads and sculptured column surrounds were positioned midway along the auditorium wall. This composition was unique to the west elevation (see Photo nos. 4, 6).

Simple, rectangular window openings with no decorative detailing occurred on the Seventh Avenue, Olive Way, and alley sides of the theatre. For the most part these contained steel sash, either fixed or six-over-six light, double hung. Some were wire glass, and three, on the south facade, were of stained glass. Most of the theatre's retail shop windows of plate glass remained in place at the time of demolition. A number of these had been blocked from within in the late 1970s and bordered with shouldered-arch stencils. Hinged windows lit the theatre office spaces above storefronts at the northwest end of the building. Transom windows above the central group of shop fronts on Seventh Avenue had been replaced with decorative Jack McGovern-era stained glass (see Photo nos. 2, 4-6).

7. **Roof:** The roof of the Music Hall Theatre, not visible from the ground, conformed to the gradual slope of the trusses that supported it. It dropped more sharply at the perimeter to gutters concealed by parapets approximately 3 feet in height. The roof was clad with hot tar. At the far east end of the fly tower was an original 40-foot-long water

tank, enclosed in concrete, designed to augment the theatre's sprinkler system (see Photo no. 57).

## C. Description of Interior

### 1. Floor plans

- a. Basement: Architect Ford's design drawings depict the basement of the Music Hall as a functionally complex space devoted to stage and house support systems. An array of specialized rooms were oriented around a sunken, central fan room approximately 42 feet by 64 feet in dimension. The south end of the basement, nearly one-quarter of its total floor area, consisted of spaces used for the maintenance and operation of the house: an electrician's shop, a large janitor's room, a switchboard room, ushers' and door mens' locker rooms. For theatre patrons, a mens' lounge or smoking room, 27 by 37 feet in size, was accessed by stairs from the Seventh Avenue foyer above (see Photo no. 53).

The northern three-quarters of the basement floor area contained two undesignated spaces taken over in the Jack McGovern Music Hall years as a rehearsal hall and as a laundry for the dinner theatre. East and west corridors on either side of the fan room were flanked by 21 dressing rooms, typically 10 feet by 14, 16, or 18 feet in size. Men's and women's toilets and two revue rooms were provided for the use of visiting theatre companies. Under the stage itself were a series of rooms for the support of live stage productions, including the 86-foot long "storage space" utilized as a scene construction shop, an orchestra room and score room with direct access to the orchestra pit, the smaller organ blower room, an elevator machinery room, a property man's room, and the stage electrician's and janitor's rooms. In the late 1970s, openings between the front and rear, or house and stage, support areas of the basement were installed, thus making possible for the first time full circulation within the basement of the Music Hall (see Photo nos. 42, 43).

- b. First floor: The main or street level of the Music Hall was devoted both to theatre and commercial use. Ten retail shop spaces abutted the sidewalk on the south and west sides of the building. The shops along Seventh Avenue were typically 24 feet in depth, and 13



to 20 feet in width. Partitions between three of these stores were removed in the late 1970s and the enlarged space converted to kitchen use. Above the three northernmost shops was a half story of commercial space originally identified as theatre offices. Those retail shops fronting on Olive Way were trapezoidal in plan reflecting the footprint of the building. The large corner shop had been utilized in recent years as a theatre office and was accessed on the interior from the Seventh Avenue foyer (see Photo no. 54).

Architect Ford's drawings designate the Music Hall's formal lobby as the foyer. Approximately 28 feet deep and 46 feet wide, the foyer rose a full two stories in height. A decorative, wood-panelled refreshment bar from the 1950s and a plywood-panelled cloak room from the 1970s protruded into the central floor space. At its west end, the foyer narrowed into a low-ceilinged exit corridor identified as the Seventh Avenue foyer. At its east end were two small rooms designated as the house manager's office, and the original cloak check room, later converted to storage. Four entrances to the auditorium were ranged along the north wall of the foyer (see Photo nos. 15, 16, 54).

From proscenium to rear wall, the auditorium measured 102 feet, and from side to side 92 feet. Four levels of tiered dinner theatre seating replaced the original three-sectioned, sloped-floor seating shown in the permit drawings (see Photo no. 54).

The stage itself was slightly trapezoidal in plan, averaging about 40 feet in depth. The proscenium arch framed an opening 46 feet wide and 35 feet high. A thrust stage constructed in the 1980s extended out over the orchestra pit. Hatch doors in the flooring at center stage and stage left permitted the hoisting of props and sets from the scene shop at basement level below. The fly gallery and switchboard were situated at stage right. Flanking the stage were the organ relay room and piano rooms, above which the organ chambers rose behind ornamental cast-plaster grilles (see Photo nos. 40, 54).

- c. Mezzanine: Accessed by formal staircases from the foyer, the mezzanine level featured an elegant flow of spaces. At the south end of the building was a formal lounge, distinctly trapezoidal in plan. Occupying the southwest corner of the mezzanine was a suite of ladies' rooms, consisting of an arcaded outer gallery,

a lounge, a dressing room, and toilets (the latter two spaces combined in Jack McGovern-era remodelling). Two intimate foyers with recessed niches for drinking fountains gave access to mezzanine seating and to balcony staircases. In the auditorium, loge seating had been converted to dinner theatre banquettes and tables. The space directly above this seating, which once had served as a mezzanine promenade, had been partially enclosed in the late 1970s as a bar, blocking views across the upper foyer to the lounge and leaving limited circulation space (see Photo nos. 23-25, 55).

- d. **Balcony:** The three-section seating configuration depicted in design drawings for the Music Hall's balcony remained intact at the time of demolition. There were two major points of access by staircase into the center section at the lower of two cross aisles (see Photo nos. 35, 56).

One important deviation from Ford's original drawing for the balcony occurred seemingly prior to completion of the theatre's construction. The projection room, as built, extended approximately 8 feet into the uppermost seating section and was accessed by a door on its west side. The switchboard was actually mounted on the east wall and the toilet facilities were installed in the northwest corner of the room. That this alteration took place during the final phases of construction is confirmed by photographer Frank Jacob's opening night photo of the projection room and by records of the building inspector, which note approval of the steel and concrete extension of the floor of the "picture machine booth" on March 15, 1929. Permit records also include an unsigned, undated drawing in the style of Sherwood Ford's office labeled as "Revised Projection Room" (see Photo nos. 36, 51).

2. **Stairways:** The Music Hall Theatre housed eight major flights of stairs. Formal stairs at both the east and west ends of the foyer led patrons to the mezzanine level and continued up to the center balcony. From the foyer both flights led down to the mens' smoking room and to house support areas. These grand stairs were eight feet in width and were entered under shouldered archways flanked by engaged plaster columns. Wooden, bracket-mounted handrails were featured. From the foyer, these runs diverged at a landing, leading south to the mezzanine lounge, or north to loge seating (see Photo nos. 16, 17, 23).

Two other staircases were situated in the southeast and southwest corners of the theatre, next to the adjacent retail shops. These narrower stairs, four feet in width, were less formal and visible than those described above. They provided patrons an alternate means of exit from the rear balcony to the first floor foyer (see Photo nos. 54-56).

Stage stairs were located at the far northeast corner of the building and at the west end of the stage. These offered access for actors and technicians from basement dressing rooms and rehearsal areas below. Two sets of stairs flanked the auditorium, giving egress from the mezzanine and balcony levels, and access to fire escapes and street level exits on the alley and Seventh Avenue (see Photo nos. 53-56).

3. **Flooring:** With the exception of its wooden stage floor, the Music Hall Theatre contained finished cement flooring throughout. Ford's original design drawings called for carpet strips in virtually all public areas. These were replaced at intervals over the years with new patterns and styles of carpeting. At the time of demolition, a combination of Jack McGovern-era gold and orange carpeting, along with Emerald Palace-period green was in place. No carpeting had survived in the auditorium (see Photo nos. 16, 20, 25, 54, 55).
4. **Walls and ceilings:** In the basement of the Music Hall, most rooms were finished with plaster walls and suspended, metal lath and plaster ceilings. The men's smoking room was an exception: there the rough concrete walls and ceiling were left textured by the wooden construction forms in imitation of Spanish interior woodwork. Several of the more utilitarian spaces -- the scene shop, the electrician's room, and the switchboard room -- all remained in unfinished concrete (see Photo nos. 42-44).

First floor retail shops and offices also had plastered walls and suspended lath and plaster ceilings. The foyer, mezzanine, and stairwell walls all received a rough textured concrete finish reminiscent of rustic Spanish masonry. In the auditorium, wall surfaces below mezzanine level were scored in imitation of rusticated stonework. Ceilings throughout were of suspended cast plaster, ornate and lavish in their design and execution. The character of those ceilings, as well as decorative wall treatments, colors, and finishes are described below in II. C. 6, Decorative features and finishes (see Photo nos. 14, 21, 31).

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways & doors: The Music Hall contained a wide variety of interior door types, including both wood and metal. Architect Ford's drawings note the installation of numerous fire doors with panic bolts as required by code. In formal public areas, structural openings in the concrete walls reflected various arch forms -- shouldered, segmental, and simple round -- as well as standard rectilinear. Originally, doorways in the foyer and mezzanine areas featured curtained closures only. Historic photographs reveal that these partially shrouded openings contributed to the ambience of mystery and spacial illusion for which the theatre's interior was noted. Where solid closures were required in the public spaces, these were typically single or double wood doors with triple molded, octagonal panels and heavy iron hardware. Examples of these occurred in the men's smoking lounge and between foyer and auditorium (see Photo nos. 14, 16, 44, 47).
- b. Windows: Owing to the theatrical function of the building, few windows admitted light to the interior public areas. Of those that did serve to light the interior, the most imposing were the five shouldered-arch, stained glass windows that illuminated the mezzanine lounge from Olive Way. The polychromed panes, in combination with the mustard-gold treatment of the lounge walls and carpet, created a warm, golden glow. Light from this room filtered into the upper reaches of the foyer through three shouldered-arch openings with cast concrete balustrades in imitation of Spanish grillework. Directly opposite these decorative interior archways were identical window-like openings into the mezzanine loge. The loge archways had been infilled in the Jack McGovern-era remodel, disguising one of the most dramatic spatial effects of the interior. An arcade of wide, segmental-arched openings, also with concrete balustrades, partitioned the ladies' gallery at the west end of the mezzanine level (see Photo nos. 15, 16, 21, 22).

6. Decorative features and finishes:

- a. Men's smoking room: Mustard gold colored paint covered the rough concrete walls of the men's lounge at the time of demolition. Decorative stencilling remained on the soffits of the ceiling beams

originally left textured by the construction forms to suggest wood. Heraldic shield motifs in red, teal blue, cream and brown also formed a border on the upper wall at the east and west ends of the room. Two chain-suspended light fixtures of ornate wrought iron each featured five candelabra, or bulbs on candlesticks. Much of the restrained but bold, masculine character of the room had been eroded over the years with the removal of tapestries, Spanish-styled leather chairs, carpeting, and stencilled ceiling treatment (see Photo no. 44).

- b. Foyer: The decor of the grand foyer or lobby survived somewhat more successfully. In the Music Hall's final incarnation as a dinner theatre, the foyer walls had received a mint green coat of paint, one of many that cumulatively obscured the textured "stucco" look of the concrete walls. The carpet was a 1980s emerald green.

On the foyer ceiling movie patrons first encountered the Music Hall's lavish use of interior cast-plaster ornament. Four sculpted segmental arches of concrete divided the length of the ceiling into three bays. The signature profile of each arch was a wavelike pattern of cyma-recta and cyma-reversa moldings, found in multiple locations throughout the interior of the theatre. Within each bay, cast-plaster beams and rafters with a rich faux-bois finish evoked the heavily carved interior woodwork of Spain. A geometric design in relief covered the surface of each beam, and the rafters terminated in a decorative scalloped cornice with pendant moldings. Between the rafters, ceiling panels were finished in a flat antique red (see Photo nos. 15, 16).

Three suspended, octagonal lanterns lit the upper reaches of the foyer. Like other lighting fixtures throughout the house, these chandeliers were actually fabricated of a combination of metals, such as cast aluminum, stamped steel, and cast, spun, or stamped brass, much of it in imitation of cast or wrought iron. The amber colored "glass" was another design illusion -- the translucent glazing was in fact composed of paper thin, lightweight mica. Faceted stones of colored glass served as jewels in these and other fixtures, adding a sumptuousness that heightened the overall effect (see Photo nos. 15, 16).

Six wall-mounted lanterns hung from sinuous dragon brackets, four along the outer south wall and two (of

an original four) marking the auditorium entrances. The lanterns themselves featured a filigreed base with white and orange geometric-patterned glazing above (see Photo no. 14).

Engaged, cast-plaster columns guarded the formal lobby staircases at either end of the foyer. Rich in sculpted detail, the columns displayed repeated heraldic and acanthus leaf motifs, and had a faux-bois finish. Winged rams served as both column base and capital (see Photo nos. 16, 17).

- c. Mezzanine: Mint green walls and bright green carpeting continued up the formal stairs and into the mezzanine foyers. Recessed arches at both staircase landings had been in-filled in recent years with fabric-covered panels, obscuring wallpaper images of Spanish galleons. Drinking fountain niches in the foyer areas retained their projecting three-sided bases and ornate, shouldered-arch detailing above (see Photo nos. 19, 23, 24).

The suite of ladies' rooms at the west end of the mezzanine level had been entirely refurbished in the Jack McGovern era with garish colors, fixtures, and furnishings. In the lounge were mirrored walls and an island dressing table. No trace of the original stencilled ceiling or the art-deco furnishings remained.

Remnants of the 1970s McGovern-era decor could also be seen in the mustard gold walls and carpet of the mezzanine lounge. The suspended ceiling consisted of barrel-vaulted bays of cast plaster, each visually "supported" by wide, corbelled beams. Ceiling surfaces were stencilled to simulate blue damask. The beams were polychromed, on a base of brown faux-bois, with patterns of green, gold, and red (see Photo nos. 21, 22).

Lighting fixtures in the mezzanine lounge included four octagonal, chain-suspended chandeliers with sunburst bases. Delicate filigree, candelabra, tassel pendants, and red and green jeweled details completed the composition. On the south wall were three wall-mounted sconces, each with five candelabra lights. On the north wall two lanterns hung from dragon brackets, identical to those in the foyer below (see Photo no. 21).

- d. Auditorium: True to the design formula of picture palaces nationwide, interior ornamentation of the Music Hall reached its pinnacle in the auditorium. All of the elaborate ceiling, proscenium enframingent, and organ grilles were constructed of cast plaster reinforced with layered fiber. Ceiling elements were suspended by stab wires from the roof trusses. The plasterwork ranged in thickness from 3/4 inch to 2 feet. Its surface treatment, in general, was a faux-bois finish intended to evoke aged, burnished wood, with an overlay of muted polychrome. At the time of demolition, the auditorium's side walls had been painted a solid dark brown. No carpeting remained on the floors.

Several grandiose features of cast plaster dominated the overall design scheme of the auditorium. The proscenium awning had a geometrically patterned surface, and cabled piers supported the signature wave-like profile of the arch itself. The organ grilles were composed of massive shouldered arches flanked by columns (a theme recalled from the frontispiece of the Olive Way facade). At the base of each grille panel projected a ship's prow, at once fantastic and lifelike, cast as a single piece 2 feet in thickness. At the apex of each arch was a ship's wheel. From the richly coffered plaster ceiling over the orchestra pit, ornate lantern chandeliers could be fully raised and lowered. Over the balcony were massive plaster beams visually supported by huge consoles. The soffits of these beams were formed of the familiar wavelike moldings found throughout the theatre. Between each beam along the upper walls were decorative seashell corbels illuminated by hidden cove lighting (see Photo nos. 27, 30-32, 36-38).

Some of the plasterwork detailing received a smooth flat finish and a stencilled surface treatment. Most, however, was sculpted in a low or a deep relief and finished to resemble hand-carved woodwork. Everywhere the rich brown base was enlivened, highlighted, or shaded with antique red, teal blue, and cream. Lighting played an important role in furthering the illusion of aged wood.

The nature of the cast-plaster ornament explains the repetition, in varying scale and location, of certain forms and motifs in the Music Hall auditorium. The most predominant devices included: escutcheons, heraldic urns and trophies, sunbursts, portrait medallions, seashells, and acanthus leaves. Just as

frequently used were geometric diaper patterns, rope moldings, volutes and scrolls, cyma-recta and cyma-reversa profiles, and drops or pendants of pineapple or floral forms (see Photo nos. 32, 33, 37, 38).

The Music Hall's most dramatic light fixtures were hung in the auditorium. The original lighting scheme enveloped the space in a muted golden glow, which was the perfect complement to the rich faux-bois finishes. Like those in the foyer and mezzanine lounge, the auditorium's lighting fixtures were composed of multiple metals and often of mica in lieu of glass.

The centerpiece of the room was a massive cylindrical chandelier positioned just forward of the balcony. Six smaller lanterns supported by brackets encircled it. "Jewels" of emerald and amber color added a sumptuousness to the delicate filigree of the metalwork, composed largely of shield and garland motifs. Six octagonal secondary chandeliers remained in place at the time of the Music Hall's demolition, lighting the area between the orchestra and lower balcony. Their panels of amber-toned mica with orange and brown diamonds gave the appearance of leaded glass. Under the mezzanine and balcony, and along the back row of the balcony, were numerous, frosted-glass foliate-patterned fixtures that provided uplighting for the decorative panelled ceilings above. Designed for purely ornamental purposes were four pendant fixtures in a sunburst motif, suspended under each of the columns flanking the organ grilles. Two sun-shaped panels of ribbed glass sandwiched red and amber bulbs, and linear squiggles of brass emanated from the center (see Photo nos. 32, 33, 38, 39).

Some of the auditorium lighting was of more recent vintage, added by the Jack McGovern operation in the late 1970s. Two sets of spider lights hung over the tiered seating at orchestra level. Eight lights consisting of cast-plaster baskets, finished with a burnished brass effect, were installed largely to illuminate the balcony ceiling (see Photo nos. 29, 35).

**7. Mechanical equipment:**

- a. Projection equipment: The Music Hall's original Movietone projection equipment had long since been removed (see Photo no. 51). That which remained at the time of demolition dated presumably from the



refurbishing of the facility for its stint as the Seventh Avenue Theatre, from 1967 to 1977. At the time of demolition, it was acquired by the owners of the Paramount Theatre in Seattle, disassembled and put into storage.

- b. Sound and lighting systems: The house lighting system, installed by Ne Page McKenney Co. in 1928, was largely intact, as were most of the fixtures described above. Hand-operated winches, which once raised and lowered the auditorium chandeliers, had been updated with electrical chain hoists in the Jack McGovern remodelling. At that same time, a new stage lighting system was installed and a modern sound system designed.
  - c. Plumbing, heating, and fire prevention: The Music Hall was equipped with centralized steam heating, a waterwash circulation system installed by Rautman Plumbing and Heating at the time of the theatre's construction. When the system was in use the entire building, including the retail shop spaces, received heat. Portions of the plumbing system were original, but updated toilet facilities, and entirely new kitchen and laundry facilities dating from the late 1970s were in place. The Music Hall featured a sprinkler system that was part of architect Ford's original design. It was backed up by a 40-foot long water tank on the roof. The building was wired with a "Sonotrol" security system.
  - d. Stage system: The Music Hall had retained its Otis fluid hydraulic system, designed to raise the orchestra up to stage level. For stage productions, sets produced in the basement scene shop could be raised through stage trap doors and flown directly into the tower above. The original Armstrong Counterbalance System grid, carrying 55 line sets, remained intact. New lines and stage apparatus had been installed in 1964 (see Photo nos. 40-42).
8. **Furnishings:** At the time of demolition little remained of the Music Hall's original extravagant trappings, as pictured in the Frank Jacobs photos of 1929. What furnishings were extant are thought to have been replacement pieces. Some reupholstered versions of high-backed Spanish-styled chairs from the foyer may have ended up in the mezzanine lounge. Certain wrought iron pieces found in the men's smoking room may have originated in other areas of the theatre. These, and all their more recent replacements, were sold at auction

to various individuals prior to demolition of the Music Hall.

**D. Site:**

1. **General setting and orientation:** The Music Hall Theatre was situated at the southern end of a half-block site in downtown Seattle. Oriented to the south, the theatre's formal facade faced Olive Way. The site was further bounded by Stewart Street on the north, by an alley on the east, and by Seventh Avenue on the west. The total square footage of the half-block was 35,895 square feet.

Directly behind the theatre to the north was a two-lot parcel of land occupied, at the time of the theatre's demolition, by a parking lot managed by the Dollar Rent-A Car Company. East of the alley stood the 20-story, brick-faced Marsh and McLennan Building, built in the 1970s as the Daon Building. Across Stewart Street to the north was a full-block parking lot. The 1929 Tower Building, known for many years as the Textile Tower, stood opposite the theatre across Seventh Avenue to the west. Directly across Olive Way from the Music Hall was the landscaped plaza of the 1600 Bell Plaza Building (see Photo nos. 1, 7).

2. **Neighborhood context:** The site of the Music Hall Theatre was located at the northeast corner of Seattle's downtown retail district. In 1929, when the theatre first opened, the immediate vicinity was characterized by one- and two-story commercial buildings. Several substantial, early-day highrises, including the Tower Building, the Lloyd Building, and the Vance and Camlin Hotels, dotted the surrounding neighborhood. In later years, the Music Hall was recognized as part of a larger, historic entertainment district that encompasses the still-extant Coliseum and Fifth Avenue theatres on Fifth Avenue, the Paramount Theatre on Pine Street at Ninth, and the Moore Theatre on Second at Virginia.

Construction of the interstate freeway through downtown Seattle in the mid-1960s, and the staging of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair both took place in close proximity to the Music Hall Theatre. These events precipitated lasting changes in the district including building demolitions, loss of modest housing, and a proliferation of parking lots. In the 1970s and 1980s, new office tower construction such as the Marsh-McLennan Building and 1600 Bell Plaza, altered the scale of the immediate surroundings along Olive Way. At

the time of the Music Hall's demolition in 1991-1992, the surrounding streetscapes were defined by a mixture of vintage, terra-cotta clad hotels and office buildings, modern high-rise towers, and undeveloped parking lot sites. The free-standing Music Hall Theatre, with its richly-ornamented street facades and its distinctive silhouette, made a unique contribution to the character of the neighborhood (see Photo nos. 1, 7).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

- 13 Sherwood Ford design drawings, undated. Transferred to microfiche (jacket nos. 1-3), originals no longer available. Microfilm Library, Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use. Copy microfiche at Museum of History and Industry. Seattle, WA. Copy prints (24" x 36") at Clise Properties, Inc. See Photo nos. 52-62.
- 28+ Sherwood Ford/Hall & Stevenson structural drawings, 1927. Transferred to microfiche (jacket nos. 3-11), originals no longer available. Microfilm Library, Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use.
- 3 Cascade Fixture Company sketches of lighting and winch equipment, one dated March, 1929. Transferred to microfiche (jacket no. 1), originals no longer available. Microfilm Library, Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use.
- 1 Sherwood Ford alteration drawing for a revised projection room, no date. Transferred to microfiche (jacket no. 13), original no longer available. Microfilm Library, Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use.
- 11 Alteration drawings as follows:
- B. Marcus Priteca, alteration to office, 1945.
  - Carlson, Eley, Grevstad Architects, alterations to refreshment bar, 1950.
  - B. F. Shearer Co., floor plans of auditorium with seating counts, 1967.
  - Automatic sprinkling system diagrams, no date.
  - Thomas E. Dunstan Architect, shop remodel, no date.
- All transferred to microfiche (jacket nos. 13-14), originals no longer available. Microfilm Library, Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use.
- 29 Harry Nelson alteration drawings for Jack McGovern, 1977-78. Transferred to microfiche. Microfilm Library, Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use.
- 6 Tonkin & Koch alteration drawings for Janie Carr, 1987. Transferred to microfiche. Microfilm Library, Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use.

- 8 Pacific Stone Company exterior cast stone drawings, 1927. Single bound set of blueprints, 30" x 36" in dimension. Clise Properties, Inc., scheduled for transfer to Museum of History and Industry. Seattle, WA.

**B. Historic Views:**

- 30 (approx.) Documentary 8" x 10" interior and exterior photographs by Frank Jacobs, 1929. Terry Helgeson Collection. 8'hend-Kaufmann Archives. Pasadena, CA.
- 1 Opening night 8" x 10" photograph by Roy M. Peak, 1929. Terry Helgeson Collection. 8'hend-Kaufmann Archives. Pasadena, CA.
- Miscellaneous 8" x 10" exterior and interior photographs, photographers unknown, 1930s-1940s. Private collection of Michael Chervenock. Seattle, WA.
- 1 Exterior 8" x 10" view, photographer unknown, c. 1930. Seattle Post-Intelligencer Collection, neg. no. 27110. Museum of History and Industry. Seattle, WA.
- 2 Exterior 8" x 10" views, photographer unknown, 1930s. Webster and Stevens Collection, negative nos. 83.10.13, 291.1 and 291.2. Museum of History and Industry. Seattle, WA.
- 1 Exterior 8" x 10" photograph by Werner Lengenlager, 1952. Seattle Historical Society Collection, Theatres - 4028 N. Museum of History and Industry. Seattle, WA.
- 5 Exterior snapshots of Seventh Avenue Theatre, photographer unknown, c. 1970. Chris Skullerud Collection. Museum of History and Industry. Seattle, WA.
- 1 Interior 8" x 10" detail of ornamental plasterwork prior to painting, photographer unknown, June 1928. The Seattle Times Photo Library. Seattle, WA.
- 1 Exterior 8" x 10" view, photographer unknown, November 1936. The Seattle Times Photo Library. Seattle, WA.
- 35 Exterior, interior, and Jack McGovern-era publicity photographs; various photographers, 1970s to 1991. The Seattle Times Photo Library. Seattle, WA.

- 2 Exterior B" x 10" views of the Seventh Avenue Theatre, photographer Hamilton, 1977. Hamilton Collection, Theatre Notebook #20. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Division. Seattle, WA.
  - 2 Exterior B" x 10" views of Jack McGovern's Music Hall, photographer Hamilton, 1981. Hamilton Collection, Seventh Avenue Notebook #9. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Division. Seattle, WA.
  - 475 (approx.) Exterior, interior 4" x 5" documentary views before and during demolition, photographed by John Stamets, 1991-1992. Private collection of John Stamets. Seattle, WA.
  - 22 Exterior, interior 4" x 5" views, color and black-and-white, by John Stamets, 1991. Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, WA.
- Miscellaneous 360-degree color panoramas of auditorium and mezzanine lounge, by Will Landon, 1991. Private collection of Will Landon. Bellevue, WA.

C. Interviews and Consultations:

Austin, Kay. Local Preservation Programs Coordinator, State Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Olympia, WA. Telephone interview, February 1992.

Chervenock, Michael. Theatre historian, Seattle, WA. Personal interview, 22 November 1991.

Clise, A. H. Chief Executive Officer, Clise Properties, Inc., Seattle, WA. Telephone conversation, 13 February 1992.

Elliott, Bill. Son of John William Elliott, architectural modeler, Seattle, WA. Telephone conversations and personal interview, 13 February 1992.

Gleason, Fred. Former officer of the Cascade Fixture Co., Seattle, WA. Telephone interview, 13 February 1992.

Kaasa, Tom. Theatre historian, Seattle, WA. Telephone interview, February 1992.

Kane, Karen. Allied Arts activist and author of local landmark nomination, Seattle, WA. Telephone conversations, August-October 1991.

Kaufmann, Preston, Theatre historian and author, Pasadena, CA.  
Telephone conversations, November 1991-March 1992.

Kreisman, Lawrence. Architectural historian, Seattle, WA.  
Personal interview, 5 August 1991.

McFarland, John. President, McFarland Wrecking Corporation,  
Seattle, WA. Telephone interview, February 1992.

Rasmussen, Otto. Vice President Finance, Clise Properties, Inc.,  
Seattle, WA. Personal interview, 10 April 1992.

**D. Bibliography:**

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Seattle, WA.

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Washington State Archives. Burien, WA.

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the Music Hall Theatre, Inc. Clise Properties, Inc.  
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B'hend-Kaufmann Archives. Pasadena, CA.

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Museum of History and Industry. Seattle, WA.

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a. Books

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Architecture of Fantasy. New York: Van Nostrand  
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Ornament in Spain. London: B. T. Batsford, 1888.  
Reprint. London: Alec Tiranti Ltd., 1970.

Requa, Richard S. Old World Inspiration for American  
Architecture. Los Angeles: The Monolith Portland  
Cement Co., 1929.

Sexton, R. W. Spanish Influence on American  
Architecture and Decoration. New York: Brentano's,  
Inc., 1927.

b. Periodicals

Kreisman, Lawrence. "Another Opening, Another Show."  
Madison Park Post 2 (October 1981): 1, 10-13.

Obituary, Sherwood D. Ford. Architectural Record 104:  
32-12.



Obituary, Sherwood D. Ford. Monthly Bulletin, American Institute of Architects, Washington State Chapter 17 (October 1948): 4.

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c. Newspapers

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The Seattle Times.

d. Public documents

Austin, Kay. "Movie Theatres in Washington State from 1900 to 1948" National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. August 1991.

Hearing Examiner of the city of Seattle. Findings, Conclusions, Decision and Recommendation in the matter of the appeal of Music Hall Theatre, Inc. Hearing Examiner File: LP-90-003. April 1991.

Kane, Karen. "Fox Theatre" National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. Edited by Leonard Garfield. June 1990.

Kane, Karen. "Music Hall Theatre" Seattle Landmark Nomination Form. June 1990.

Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use. Draft Environmental Impact Statement: Seventh and Olive Hotel. Seattle: May 1989.

Seattle Department of Construction and Land Use. Final Environmental Impact Statement: Seventh and Olive Hotel. Seattle: November 1989.

**E. Likely Sources Not Yet Fully Investigated:**

Bibliographic sources given in the "Movie Theatres in Washington State from 1900 to 1948" Multiple Property Documentation Form, for a more thorough treatment of picture palace history in America and the Pacific Northwest.

Corporate Records of Clise Properties, Inc. and its various companies, in particular, Minute Books for the Mayflower Theatre and Commercial Building Trusteeship, for the Mayflower Building Co., and for Music Hall Theatre, Inc. for further details on the ownership and management of the Music Hall.

Legal files of the firm of Smith, Smart, Hancock, Tabler & Schwensen for additional information on legal issues surrounding the final years of the Music Hall Theatre.

Newspaper promotions and advertisements for the period 1929 through 1988, for coverage of films, stage events, and entertainers featured at the Music Hall Theatre. Local articles from 1941 to present are indexed in the Seattle Public Library's Northwest Index, Humanities Department.

Records of the Superior Court of the State of Washington for King County, 1928-1932, for further information on the legal and financial problems of W. D. Comer and the Real Estate Improvement Co.

**F. Artifacts:**

McFarland Wrecking Corporation, Seattle, WA: all exterior cast-stone ornament, including urns, columns, floral window surrounds, cornice and parapet details. Salvaged at demolition and retained by McFarland for future sale.

Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, WA: single examples of various lighting fixtures, lamps, and chandeliers; examples of original seating; foyer telephone booth; 1950s candy machine; examples of interior signage; one cast-plaster foyer staircase engaged column with flying ram motif; various decorative urns.

Paramount Theatre, Seattle, WA: interior lighting fixtures, including all major foyer and auditorium chandeliers; movie projection equipment.

Private retail salvage businesses, Seattle, WA: interior plaster ornament, including one ship's prow, ceiling pieces, proscenium detail, foyer ornament.

**PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

- A. **Type of Project:** Documentation of the Music Hall Theatre in Seattle was a private-sector project, voluntarily undertaken by the Music Hall Theatre, Inc., owner of the property. The recording effort occurred between June of 1991 and June of 1992. Through consultation with the staff of the National Park Service Western Regional Office, Division of National Register Programs, San Francisco, Level II documentation was selected as the most appropriate HABS format for the project. Written historical and descriptive data in the Outline Format, forty-two large-format record photographs, photographic copies of eleven original architectural drawings, and reproductions of six historical images are included in the documentation packet.
- B. **Sponsors & Recipients:** This recording effort was sponsored by Clise Properties, Inc. (parent company of Music Hall Theatre, Inc.), A. H. Clise, Chief Executive Officer and A. M. Clise, President. The project was organized and supervised in its various phases by A. M. Clise and by Walter Tabler of Smith, Smart, Hancock, Tabler and Schwensen, attorneys to the owners. Complete documentation packets were submitted to the HABS Collection at the Library of Congress, and to the Washington State Department of Community Development, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation in Olympia. Additional, duplicate sets were submitted to the following Seattle-area repositories: the Museum of History and Industry, the Seattle Public Library, and the University of Washington Libraries' Special Collections and Preservation Division. Two complete documentation packets were retained by the project sponsor, Clise Properties, Inc.
- C. **Preparers:** Written documentation of the Music Hall Theatre was prepared by Florence K. Lentz, Cultural Resource Consulting, of Seattle, Washington. Seattle architectural photographer John Stamets was responsible for the record photography. Photographic images of the original architectural drawings were made by Argentum Photographic Services of Seattle, and the reproduction of selected historical photos was supervised by the B'hend-Kaufmann Archives of Pasadena, California.